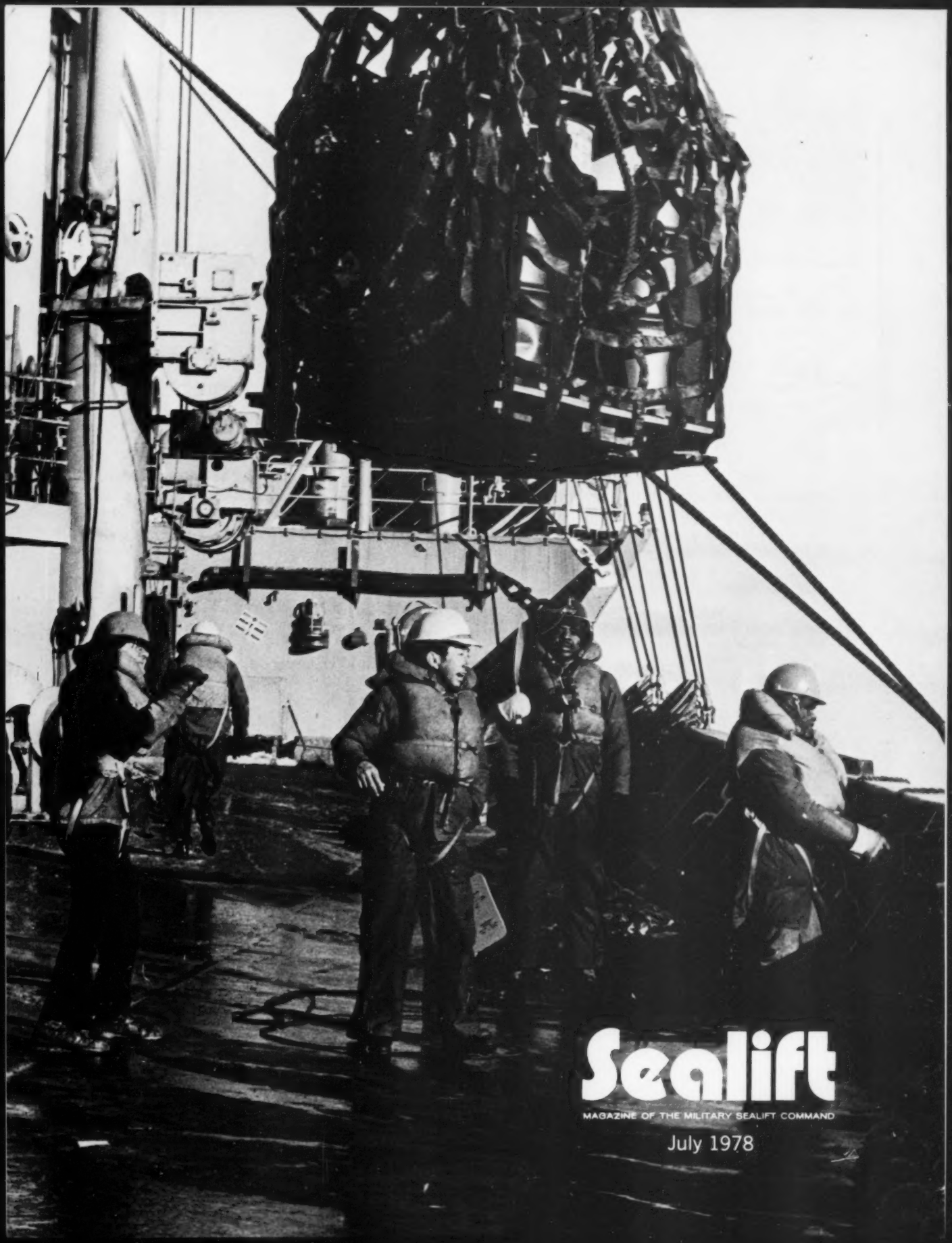


Sealift

MAGAZINE OF THE MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

July 1978

What Is Past Is Prologue

It began on a beautiful morning in April 1607 when three storm-beaten ships anchored near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay and three men stepped ashore to explore a new land. The American dream was tested at Lexington, at Bunker Hill and Concord, at Oriskany and Saratoga, at Gettysburg and Yorktown. A new nation, the United States of America, forged in the crucibles of Valley Forge, has had its power and its will tested in the Argonne, Belleau Wood and Cassino, and on the long and tortuous paths to Paris and Berlin, to Okinawa, Leyte and Tokyo.

The extent of U.S. resolve and its dedication to a common cause has been challenged in the rice paddies of Korea, the deserts of Africa, the jungles of Vietnam, and on all of the world's seas.

Throughout its history, one nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal has endured and grown until it has become a most powerful and yet compassionate force that serves as an example for all mankind. The United States of America is a shining light which continues to fuel the dreams of those who choose to believe in the supremacy of the individual, and freedom for each man or woman to pursue his or her own dreams.

There are many milestones in American history, perhaps the most significant of which is July 4, Independence Day. It is on that day that Americans traditionally gather to honor the nation and the flag which is the symbol of its greatness, as well as to recall the contributions of the many men and women who helped expand our frontiers, develop the ideals, and assure the benefits that are inherent to the American way of life.

The way of life has changed drastically in more than 200 years of American history. The forces that have brought change are numerous. Many, routine though they may now be, were amazing when they were developed. And many of those changes are elements of a transportation system that has contributed in so many ways to the development of the United States.

The early settlers came to our country in ships. They were supplied by ships, and merchant ships carried U.S. products to the very corners of the globe and helped our nation prosper.

Inland waterways helped push the U.S. frontier westward and that once distant territory was brought even closer by the Yankee Clippers, then by an arterial-like rail system that pumped the economic lifeblood of the nation to its many communities. Our highway system and the trucks that succeeded the covered wagon speeded the continuing expansion of our industrial and agricultural cornucopia.

Advent of aircraft, giant jets that fly high above our cities and over broad expanse of ocean, have tumbled the once almost insurmountable barriers of time and distance—and man's landing on the moon marked our conquest of space itself.

Some fear that a future war, which we hope will never take place, might involve space-borne weapons. It is far more likely, however, that the disasterous consequences of all-out war might force all nations to limit themselves to more conventional though still deadly weapons. No matter what, mobility of our Armed Forces is an absolute necessity if this nation is to be able to maintain its security and to continue to pioneer the cause of universal freedom.

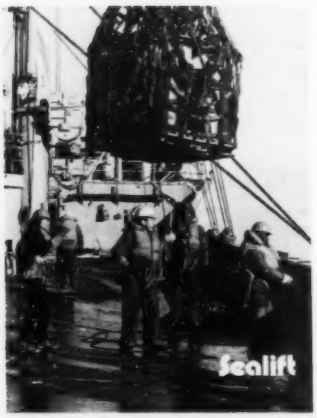
Transportation is the foundation of that mobility and ocean transportation is a particularly important element since it is our ships which must carry the vast amount of equipment and supplies required of a modern war. Sea and air carriers themselves are heavy consumers of fuel, and that too must be delivered to the right place at the right time.

In the final analysis, the productivity of our nation's transportation system in support of a contingency action must be as responsive, as reliable, as versatile and as effective as it has been throughout the development of our nation.

That requires that such a system be integrated, that all of the various modes of transport be used as effectively as possible and that they complement one another. It requires that industry and the Department of Defense pool their expertise, their resources, and their typically American ingenuity to assure that we will observe many additional Independence Days.

It has been said that history is but the prologue to the future. If that be so, it is certain that Americans not only will continue to be challenged but that they also will meet and master those challenges while continuing to make the United States of America the greatest of all nations.

Commander, Military Sealift Command



COVER: Crewmen of USNS Rigel direct a load of cargo to an awaiting ship, one of many jobs that led to winning the NDTA Outstanding Unit Award. See page 4.

Sealift

MAGAZINE OF THE MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

Vol. XXVIII No. 7 Washington, D.C. July 1978

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Another Honor For USNS Rigel

Hard work and determination again have paid off for the crew of the USNS Rigel which has been selected by the National Defense Transportation Assn. (NDTA) as the Navy's outstanding transportation unit.

Rigel is the only Navy resupply cargo ship that supports the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean and is the only refrigerated stores ship in the Military Sealift Command nucleus fleet of 69 ships.

The top transportation organization from each military service will receive Outstanding Unit awards during the 33rd annual NDTA Transportation and Logistics Forum and Exposition at the Washington (D.C.) Hilton Hotel from October 1 through October 4.

Former Chief of Naval Operations Adm. James L. Holloway, III said units considered for the award clearly exceed normal standards of performance and have distinguished themselves in transportation missions.

Assigned to MSC in 1975, Rigel became the first Navy stores ship to be manned and operated by a Civil Service crew. The ship also has a military department of Navy men who handle communications and liaison duties. Commanding officer of the military department is Lt. Cmdr. James Lamb.

Master of the Rigel is Capt. Manuel G. Vieira who took over the ship when it was first turned over to MSC. Vieira joined the command in 1954. In less than 10 years he worked his way up from seaman to second officer, becoming master of USNS Wyandot in 1968.

Chief Engineer Van Altman also joined Rigel when it became an MSC manned ship. Altman began his seagoing career in 1934 and joined the Army Transport Service in 1944, which in 1949 became part of Military Sealift Command. He received a letter of commendation in 1977 for his part in the successful operations of the Rigel.

Rigel in its fleet support missions has never failed to meet a commitment. By April 30, its crew made nine voyages to the Mediterranean and transported approximately 41,000 measurement tons of dry cargo, chilled and frozen foodstuff, spare parts, repair and maintenance items, fleet freight and retrograde cargo.

During the 28-months Rigel has been operating, its crew has made 244 replenishments with fleet ships,

A helicopter is guided to a landing on Rigel's flight deck. Vertical replenishment by helicopter is major method of transferring cargo while ships are under way.

averaging 10 connected replenishments, 9 vertical replenishments, 3 boat replenishments, 3 in-port replenishments and 2 major consolidations with an on-station stores ship following each of its nine voyages between Norfolk and the Mediterranean.

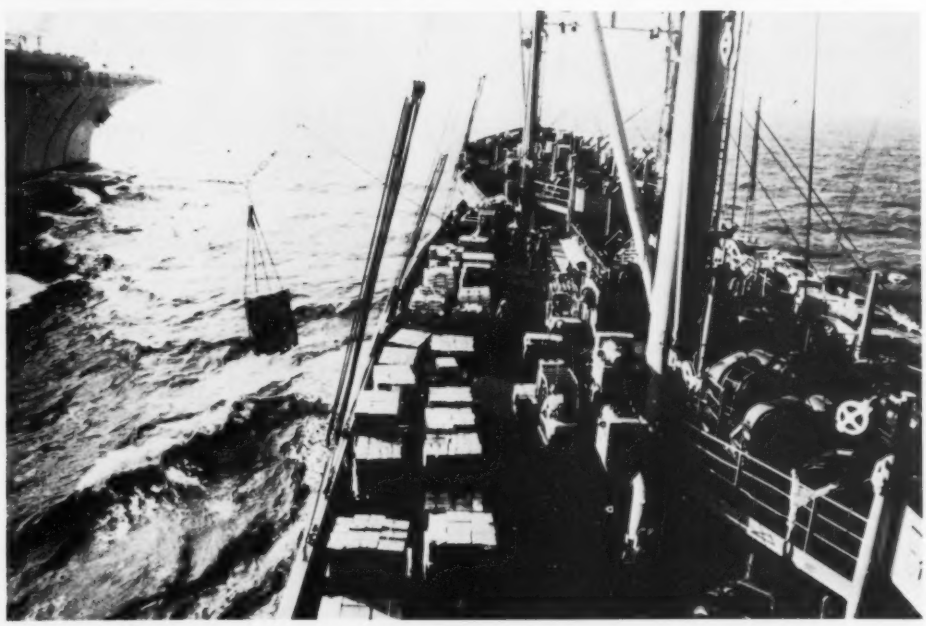
Between February 1977 and February 1978, USNS Rigel carried 18,000 measurement tons of freight to the Mediterranean and transferred 12,900 measurement tons while under way. Total value of the cargo was more than $14 million. Total number of accounting line items transmitted to the Naval Supply Center, Norfolk was 13,316 for this period.

USNS Rigel is somewhat unusual as a Navy transportation unit in that it fulfills several related roles, beginning with the scheduled ocean delivery of supplies and equipment from Norfolk to the Mediterranean area.

Operating within that area, the crew of USNS Rigel transfers cargo from ship to ship while Rigel steams a course parallel to and about 120 feet from ships it is supplying.

In cargo transfer operations while under way, the Rigel crew passes cargo using five replenishment rigs. The crew also is responsible for supporting Navy helicopters during vertical replenishment operations, for staging the cargo on the helicopter deck and hooking loads to helicopters for lifting, and for adherence to highly demanding ship and flight safety practices. Cargo also is transferred from ship to ship in port

Hausers are taken in as Rigel sails from Norfolk.



Cargo lines the Rigel deck as a pallet load is on the way to the carrier USS America.

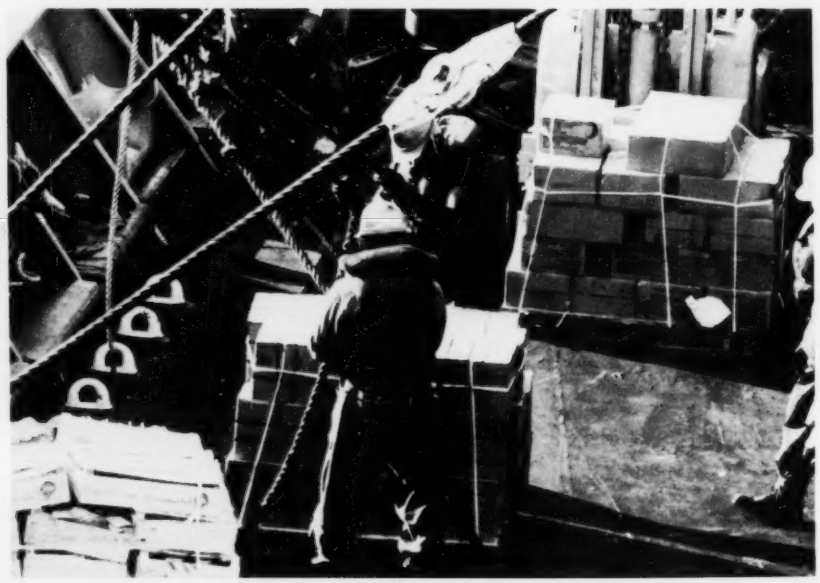
by boat, and by helicopter both in port and in the open sea.

Rigel received the award for a number of outstanding accomplishments. Among them was the transfer of 466 pallet loads of equipment, supplies and material to the carrier USS Nimitz in 2½ hours during a logistics operation. The feat was described as "outstanding" in congratulatory messages from the commander of Task Force 63 and the commanding officer of the USS Nimitz.

Rigel also established a ship's record in April 1977 when 234 pallets were staged on the small helo deck for vertical replenishment of the carrier USS John F. Kennedy.

Other notable accomplishments of Rigel included transfer of 1,076 pallets, or 20 per cent of the ship's total capacity, in one day on Sept. 18, 1977. In 16 days during this same voyage the Rigel crew transferred

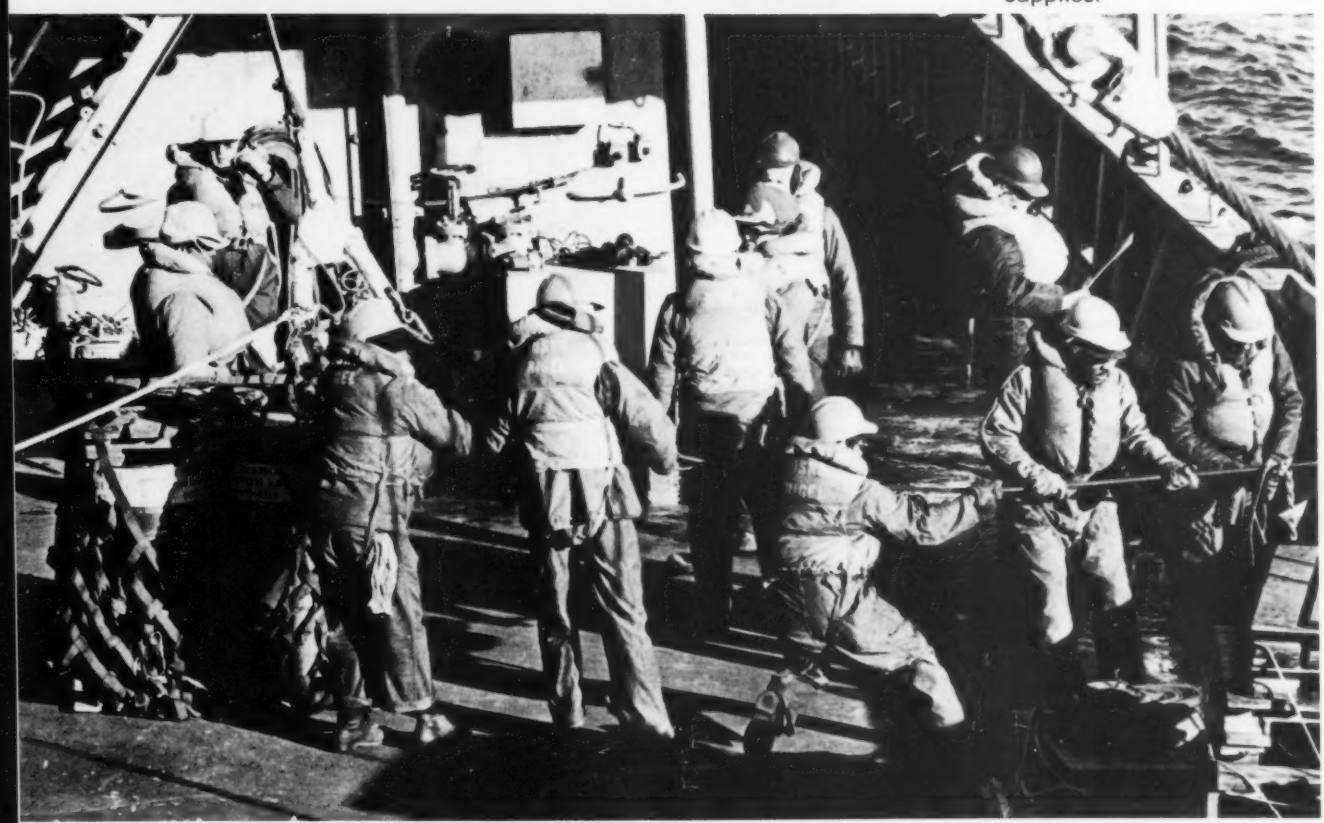
The helicopter control officer directs the pilot to the right spot.



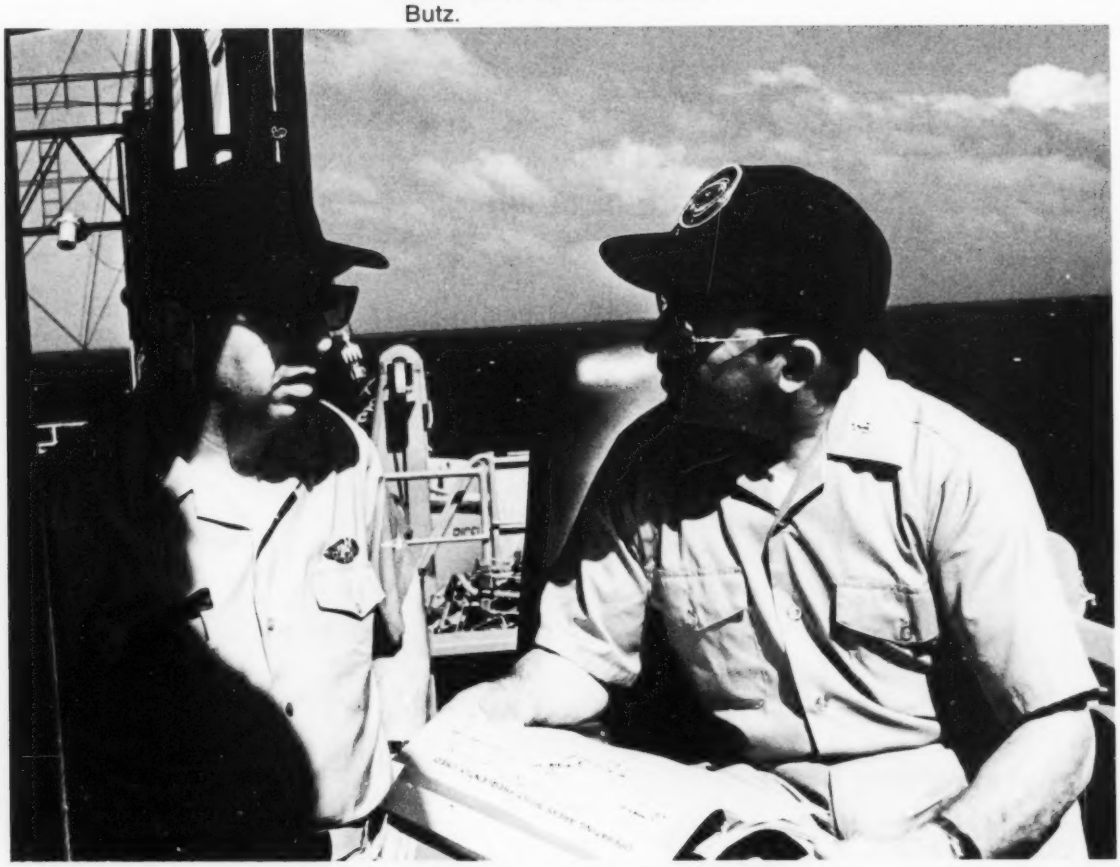
Crewmen prepare a pallet load of cargo for transfer to a fleet ship.

Crew of the stores ship Rigel has been selected by the NDTA as the Navy's outstanding transportation unit.

Rigel crewmen haul in a span wire that will be attached to the cargo rig ready for transfer of needed supplies.



Rigel master Manuel Vieira (right) discusses fleet operations with First Officer John Butz.



more cargo than any previous voyage of two 30-day cycles.

Rigel is also a winner of the MSC Smart Ship award, an annual honor bestowed on command ships for outstanding operations, reliability, safety and maintenance.

In making the announcement of the award to Rigel—an award based on a Navy nomination to the NDTA—Rear Adm. John D. Johnson, MSC commander, lauded the efforts of the combined military-Civil Service crew. They have, he said, "done a tremendous job and everyone in MSC is proud of their many successes.

"Bestowal of the NDTA award is a richly deserved honor, a great honor that we very much appreciate. It signifies the acceptance by Navy fleet commanders of Rigel's role in replenishing fleet ships, and Rigel's outstanding performance in fulfillment of that role."

General Gregg will preside at the October 2 ceremonies. Adm. John B. Hayes, Coast Guard commandant, will present the awards and be the main speaker. Approximately 800 persons have registered to attend.

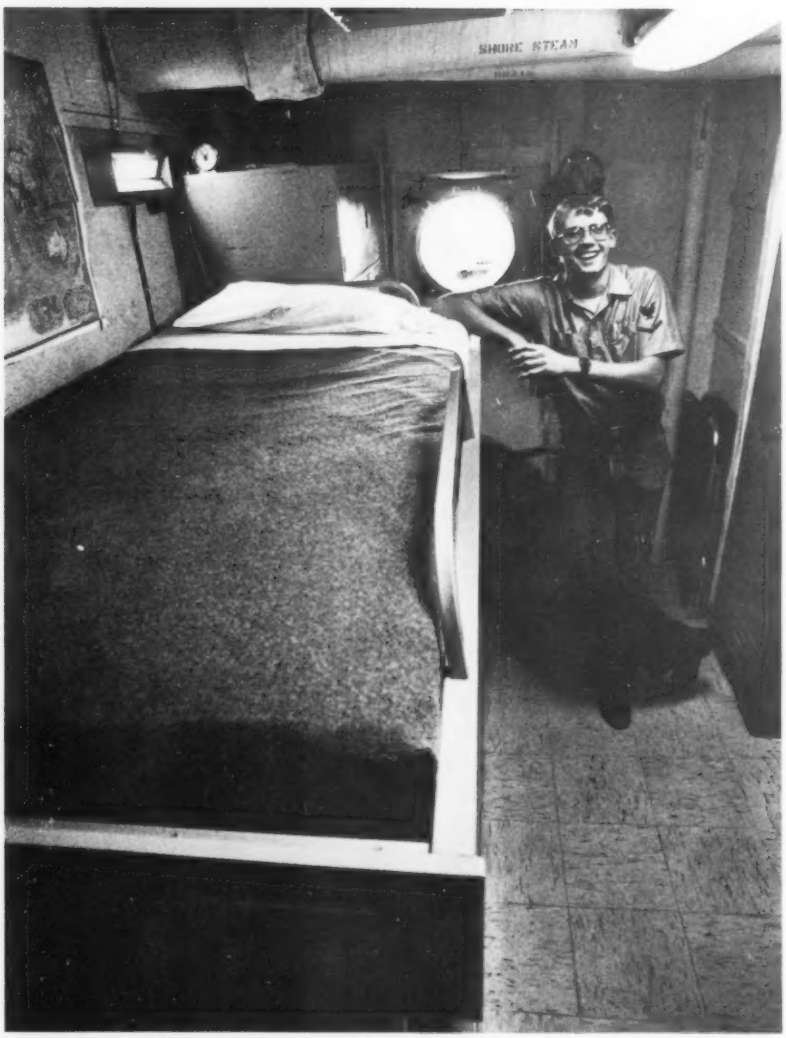
Besides Rigel, other unit winners selected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Coast Guard are:

The Army's 46th Transportation Co., 69th Transportation Battalion (truck), 8th Army, Pusan, Korea; 381st Transportation Squadron (SAC), Air Force, McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas; Marine Corps Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363, MAG 26, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, Jacksonville, N.C., and Marine Safety Office, Coast Guard, Boston.

Taking part in panel discussions during the NDTA forum will be Secretary of the Navy W. Graham Claytor, Jr., Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams, Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles W. Duncan, Jr., Army Chief of Staff Gen. Bernard W. Rogers, Joint Chiefs of Staff Logistics Director Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Gregg, Sea-Land Service Chairman Charles I. Hiltzheimer and Ford, Bacon and Davis Chairman Douglas B. Blackburn. ⚓

Navy Sailors Go First Class Aboard MSC Manned Ships

By JO1 Jerry Achison



Courtesy All Hands magazine

Radioman 3rd Class Perry Neal has good reason to smile. For starters, this picture was taken in the two-man stateroom Perry shares with a fellow third class aboard ship. Be advised—two-man staterooms are not now, nor have they ever been, standard shipboard berthing arrangements for third class petty officers.

But this is Perry's berthing arrangement aboard ship and it's one reason he's smiling. That smile also is prompted by the set-up on the mess decks.

Every sea-going sailor is familiar with the mess deck scenario. First you get in line, then you pick up a tray and walk along the food-serving line where the tray's various compartments are filled.

For Perry and his shipmates, however, it's different. They seat themselves empty-handed at a table, pick up a menu from the starched tablecloth and wait for the steward, dressed in a white coat and bearing a folded towel over one arm, to arrive and take their order.

The steward works his way around the table as the sailors drape napkins on their laps, sip from water glasses and nibble on rolls.

One sailor interrupts his meal when he remembers he forgot to remove his clothes from the dryer.

This is a true story and not some tale of the Navy of the future. These sailors who live in two-man staterooms and eat on mess decks graced by menus and stewards are members of the U.S. Navy. These same people also have their own washers and dryers.

Perry, his 15 shipmates and an officer-in-charge, enjoy all these shipboard amenities. They are members of the military department

Familiar to all sailors are the mess trays, bowls and the assembly line of servers who dish out the day's fare.

of the civilian-manned Military Sealift Command (MSC) fleet stores ship USNS Rigel.

Rigel is one of 22 U.S. Navy ships that have retained the same mission requirements but have since been reassigned to MSC for manning and operations. Each ship carries a military department ranging from one to 16 sailors depending upon that ship's job. These 22 ships perform a wide variety of fleet support or special project tasks as indicated by their composition: eight oilers, four fleet ballistic missile resupply ships, four tugboats, five special projects ships and one fleet stores ship—the already mentioned Rigel.

There are various reasons for assigning these U.S. Navy fleet support ships to MSC:

- Coinciding with the Navy's reduction in manpower during the past few years has been a marked increase in the sophistication and range of technical skills required to operate the complex warships of today. Result, fewer people possessed of greater skills—skills more effectively used aboard warships as opposed to fleet support ships. The assignment of these ships to MSC and their subsequent manning by civil marine personnel, therefore, saves trained Navy manpower. Civilian crewmen are U.S. Civil Service employees of the Navy with either Navy or merchant marine backgrounds.
- The reassignment also saves Navy shipbuilding funds by converting and using existing Navy ships operated by MSC rather than building new ones.
- It saves manpower and operating dollars as well because MSC-operated civilian-manned ships carry about one-half the crew the same ships had when Navy manned. Civilian manning also means a greater percentage of at-sea versus in-port time.

So, civilian manning saves money and manpower. But these ships still operate with the Navy. This means you've got to have military expertise aboard if they're to meet successfully their military support requirements. Here's where the military departments come in.

Navy-wide, nearly 200 sailors are assigned to 22 MSC fleet support and special project ships. Although the size of each military department may vary from ship to ship (Rigel has a 16-man department) they are staffed by men trained in unique Navy skills or in skills for which there are limited civil marine personnel equivalents.

Here's a general list of those rates:

RADIOMEN—Merchant ships, and most MSC ships carry only a single radio officer who generally stands only eight hours of watch a day. That's because message traffic is limited. Navy ships, because of their unique operational requirements and equipment redundancies, require manning of the radio shack around the clock—with radio technicians as well as operators. Around-the-clock manning is necessary to make certain that equipment is maintained at peak efficiency and that Navy signals are rapidly decoded and messages passed on. Since MSC-manned ships operate with the fleet, Navy radiomen operate and maintain radio shacks.

SIGNALMEN—Just as radiomen ensure MSC and bluejacket-manned ships are electronically "talking the same language," so are the signalmen—but in a different way. Fleet support necessarily means MSC ships operate in close quarters with the Navy's military manned ships when steaming in task groups or while conducting underway replenishments. And although we know this is the age of electronic communication, nothing has come along to replace the signalman's flags and flashing lights for quickly passing the word during these evolutions.

OPERATIONS SPECIALISTS—These specialists are particularly helpful aboard MSC ships not only because of their abilities but because of their familiarity with Navy ship-handling characteristics. Therefore, when matters of approach course and speed arise during upreps, the ship's master and military department head often turn to the operations specialist for advice.

ELECTRONICS TECHNICIANS—Since military department personnel operate many specialized or Navy-unique pieces of equipment,

someone with the right training and experience has to be around to fix that equipment. Navy electronics technicians ensure the equipment works and keeps working.

DATA PROCESSING TECHNICIANS—The Navy supply system relies heavily upon computers to keep track of what's needed, what's available and what's to be done to bring the two together. There are few civilian seagoing data processing experts so Navy data processors work with the ship's purser (supply officer) to maintain the computer records of these support ships.

YEOMEN—The larger military departments include one yeoman to handle the always present paper work and, in many cases, maintain the personnel records of the embarked sailors.

Although the military departments are composed of different people with different skills, the nature of their work aboard a civilian-manned MSC ship dictates they share some traits. Each sailor is either the sole representative of his rate aboard ship (which makes him the only such expert around) or he is expected to stand an independent watch in his particular shop (which still makes him the only expert around). Because of this, they must know their jobs well—both in depth and breadth.

And since military department manning provides for only a skeleton crew within each area, the really valuable member of the department is the sailor who not only knows his job but has taken the time to learn something of his shipmate's work as well. That's why you're likely to find a yeoman, for example, who can not only type but can also handle the signal flags aboard MSC-manned ships.

Each job is a challenge. Consider the signalman who has no section chief standing at his shoulder when he signals information allowing two mammoth ships to safely close for underway replenishments.

There are other unusual situations facing the sailor assigned to an MSC ship. The good things—like the challenging work, "plush" berthing and steward-served meals—are neutralized for some, and overshadowed for others, by the inconveniences of MSC life.

The number one disadvantage voiced by most MSC-assigned sailors is the operating schedules. MSC ships go to sea and stay at sea until their missions are fulfilled—be it transferring all their stores or every drop of oil, conducting salvage operations—in the case of MSC tugs—or laying every inch of cable in the case of cable laying ships.

In-port periods are for loading the next consignment of cargo and making preparations to get under way and back at work as soon as possible.

Civilian crews are the reason MSC can operate both at sea and away from home ports for longer periods during peacetime.

Since civilian sailors are hired and paid for the work they perform at sea on an hourly basis, it is sound fiscal policy to keep those ships at sea as much as possible. Civilian crews are also hired with the understanding that once every nine months they are eligible for rotation off the ship and back to their homes. So nine months—about the length of a Navy ship's Western Pacific deployment during war time—is the longest they will be away from home, no matter where the ship travels.

Military members on most MSC-manned ships have 12-month tours although they can extend if they want to—and many have. Exceptions to the unaccompanied year's tour are assignment to Rigel, to three of the four tugs and to the four fleet ballistic missile resupply vessels.

Two-man staterooms and mess deck pleasantries notwithstanding, MSC Navy men are not on a pleasure cruise. The high marks given the habitability arrangements (which are, by the way, established by labor-management agreements) are brought down by the long work days, a long string of days in each deployment, and the too short periods of leave and liberty.

After all, a steward who asks if you prefer mushroom or tomato soup with supper is a poor substitute for family and friends. But, as some Navy men assigned to MSC-manned ships believe, "If you've got to go to sea, you might as well go in style."

A less familiar scene is where the seated sailor's immediate problem seems to be deciding what entree to choose.

Progress Report On Union Merger

Editor's Note: This special report was prepared by the Merger Committee of the National Maritime Union and the Seafarers International Union. Architects of the merger proposal are Paul Hall, SIU president, and Shannon J. Wall, NMU president. The report is being carried by *Sealift* since status of the proposed merger is of interest to Civil Service mariners, most of whom are members of maritime unions. MSC neither endorses nor disputes the views expressed by the Merger Committee.

The maritime industry in the nations of the free world has been faced in recent years with serious problems—many of them directly traceable to the cutthroat competition of runaway flag fleets—causing some shipping companies to institute drastic cutbacks of all kinds. Orders for new vessels have been postponed or rescinded; shaky managements have backed off plans for expanding services and, worst of all, many vessels have been laid up and their crews thrown out of work.

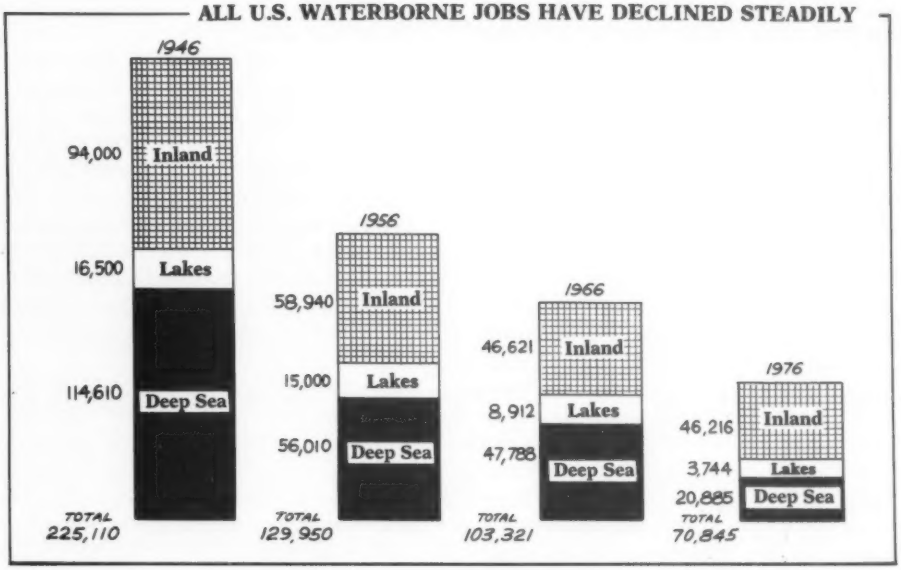
In the U.S. merchant fleet the shrinkage has been devastating. American flag vessels now carry less than 5 per cent of our nation's foreign waterborne commerce. This trend threatens the very existence of the U.S. flag merchant marine and the belt-tightening the shipping companies have been forced to undergo in order to remain competitive has severely diminished the number of jobs available to members of our maritime unions.

In the search for a solution to the dual problems of vanishing jobs and protecting the economic interests of their respective memberships, the two major unlicensed seamen's unions—the Seafarers International Union (SIU) and the National Maritime Union (NMU)—formally established in June 1977 a joint committee to develop steps which can be taken by both organizations to work more closely together in the maritime industry and to outline steps that should lead to the eventual merger of the two organizations.

What follows is an interim report by the joint committee, completed on February 21, to keep the membership of the unions and other workers in the industry abreast of developments and to invite their comments.

The hard facts of what has happened to most segments of the American merchant marine are well known to those who work in the industry. These facts mainly impel the unions to seek unity. Therefore, we present the following review of some of the most significant developments since the end of World War II.

In the 30 years between 1946 and 1976, U.S. waterborne export and import tonnage increased nearly six-fold. Yet, in that period, the number of U.S.-flag deep



sea ships decreased to barely one-quarter of their 1946 numbers. Jobs aboard U.S. deep sea vessels declined even further, to about one-fifth of the 1946 level.

In 1946, U.S. ships carried 62 per cent of U.S. foreign commerce. If we were carrying the same percentage of our foreign trade today, we should be operating some 5,000 ships with over 175,000 jobs.

But the share of our foreign commerce carried by our ships declined sharply after 1946 to only 4.8 per cent in 1976.

The decline in ships affected every category of U.S. deep sea vessels. Jobs aboard dry cargo ships declined from 89,410 at the end of 1946 to 12,319 at the end of 1976. Tanker jobs declined from 20,150 to 7,553 in the same period.

Thus the U.S. deep sea merchant fleet has shrunk from a huge diversified fleet to a small fleet capable of carrying only a small fraction of our foreign commerce. This fleet cannot by any stretch of imagination be considered capable of making even an initial response to the demand for shipping capacity which would be imposed on the United States by any full-scale defense emergency situation.

An even more severe decline has occurred in the ranks of U.S. merchant seamen. Because of the shrinkage of job opportunities and uncertainty of the industry, the numbers of skilled U.S. seamen available to man U.S.-flag ships and to form the basis for expansion in any emergency have diminished to levels inadequate for national security.

While standards for individual maritime workers have been greatly improved, job opportunities have declined drastically in all types of vessel operation. Major factors contributing to this situation have been technological developments, changed operational methods, competition of foreign flag ships and unorganized operations or other modes of transportation depending on the area involved.

A major factor in the decline of the U.S. merchant marine over the past quarter-century has been the government policies which tolerate and, in fact, encourage the use of flags-of-convenience—or as seamen know them, runaway flags—on ships of U.S. companies.

U.S. oil companies and other giant corporations have swelled their profits by the use of the runaway flag device on the ships they own or charter. It permits them to evade U.S. taxes, U.S. labor standards, safety requirements and other responsibilities which our laws impose on other U.S. ship operators and on U.S. citizens generally.

The growth of U.S.-owned runaway flag operations, their virtual monopoly of transport of our oil and bulk ore imports and the ability of runaway flag operators to influence government maritime policies are among the most important and most difficult challenges facing the maritime workers.

Automation and other technological developments in the maritime industry have vastly increased productivity of all U.S. vessels and U.S. seamen and boatmen. The increased speed of today's vessels, greater cargo capacity, faster turnarounds, automated controls, and low-maintenance equipment all have combined to give one of today's vessels, in most categories, the productive capacity of give to 10 of the vessels which dominated the trade only a few years ago.

As an example of the increased productivity of individual seamen in terms of cargo, note these figures. In 1946, there was one crew member aboard U.S.-flag ships for every 222 tons of cargo carried. In 1965, it was 288 tons per seaman. In 1976, the figure was 666 tons per

seaman aboard U.S. flag ships. And the new highly-automated ships carry crews smaller than their predecessors, despite their far greater capacity.

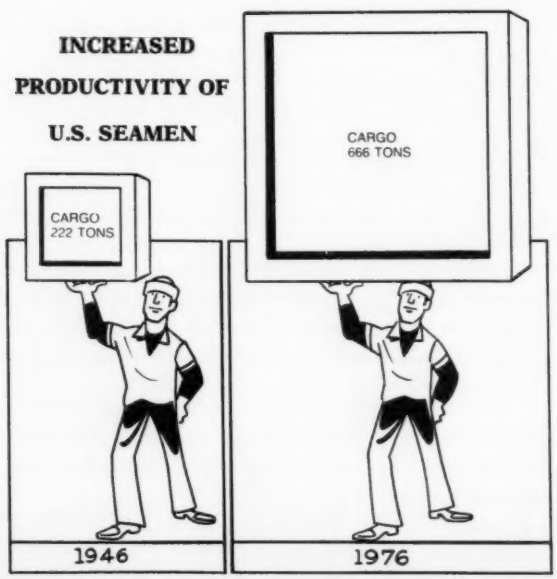
While the unlicensed seaman has been fighting for survival in the face of the trend toward smaller crews on fewer ships, the licensed officer, aided through management and the Coast Guard, is gradually taking over many shipboard duties once performed by unlicensed crewmen.

On ships built in the 1940s, approximately 80 per cent of the crew were unlicensed. Recently, the percentage of unlicensed personnel has fallen to almost 50 per cent. If the trend of tug-barge and sealed engine room vessels continues, we may soon find more officers than unlicensed seamen on U.S. vessels.

The unions have responded positively to the challenge of changing maritime technology. They have not tried to block—simply for the sake of blocking—changes which realistically could be made. Instead, the unions concentrated on protecting their members against the impact of these changes and seeing to it that the changes are translated into gains for the individual seaman in pay, overtime rates, pension and welfare, vacations and other benefits.

New skills and technical knowledge are needed aboard modern ships and unlicensed seamen are mastering these requirements in a number of excellent schools for whose creation and administration the unions are mainly responsible.

With less than 5 per cent of U.S. foreign trade under the U.S. flag, over 90 per cent of our maritime jobs have been exported overseas. And with less than 71,000 jobs, it is difficult to get the country and Congress to consider the serious problems of the industry. We cannot command the attention for our problems that other U.S. industries command.



Even so, we as maritime workers cannot speak with a voice of 71,000 strong. We are divided into little factions. The total industry is split almost in half—organized workers and unorganized workers. The voice of organized workers is diluted by the division of licensed and unlicensed maritime unions.

And to make our voice even smaller, even the organized unlicensed seamen and inland boatmen are split into nine different national and international maritime affiliates to the AFL-CIO as well as 12 other federated and independent unions. This underscores the need for merger.

It is clear that this multiplicity of unions does not serve the interests of U.S. seamen and boatmen. It also is clear that merger of the two major unlicensed unions will be a major step toward bringing all unlicensed seamen and all boatmen—on deep sea, Great Lakes, rivers and harbors—into one union.

The battle of the maritime unions to advance the well-being of their members cannot be separated from the battle for a strong U.S. flag merchant marine. This battle must be fought mainly in the agencies of government at all levels and in Congress. It must be fought also in the communications media to help the American people understand what is at stake.

A major role has been taken by the maritime unions in making lawmakers and the public aware of how weak the United States is in the maritime field. The unions have pointed out how that weakness affects the American economy and national security and what has to be done about it. Our objectives are to get administrative and legislative action to correct the weakness and assure maintenance of adequate strength under the U.S. flag in all categories of shipping.

All the logic is on the side we are fighting for. The United States is the leader of the free world with worldwide responsibilities for our own defense and defense of our allies which, in any emergency, will impose an immediate and critical demand for tremendous ocean shipping capacity. Yet the merchant fleet ranks tenth among the world's fleets.

It makes no sense to believe that our country can maintain an adequate merchant marine without substantial government protection and support. There is no maritime nation in the world which permits its own ships to carry so small a share of their own foreign commerce as does the United States. The share which ships of most competing nations carry of their own commerce is in almost every case four to 10 times greater than that of U.S. ships.

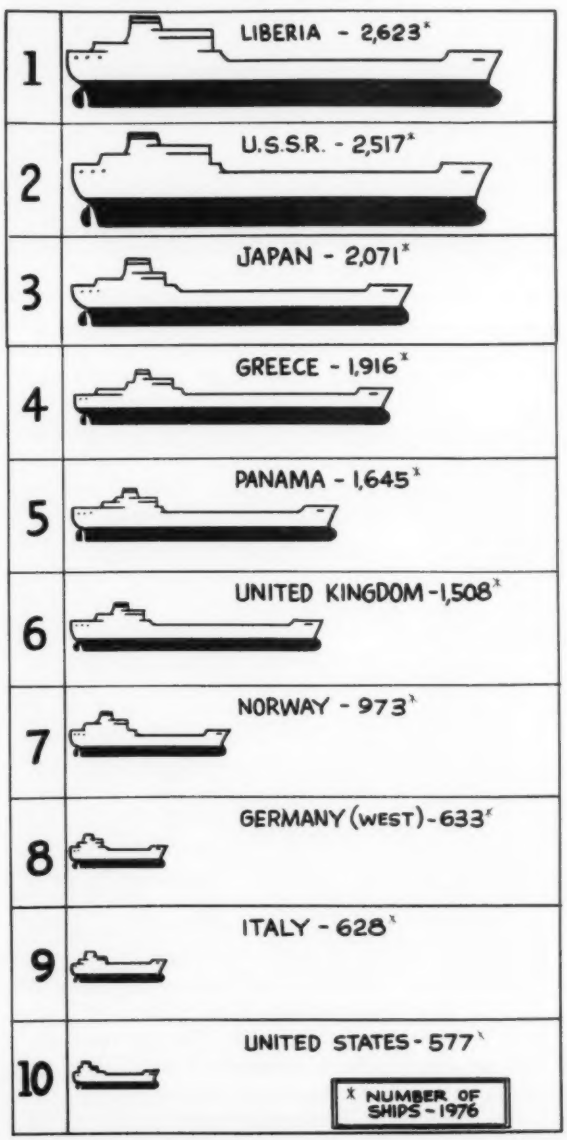
Furthermore, such a fast-growing competitor as the Soviet Union is not bound by profit-and-loss considerations in operation of its ships. There have been many recent demonstrations of the way the Soviets can force competition out of important trade routes by selective rate-cutting. Once they achieve a monopoly, they can use it for political or strategic gain to set extortionate rates.

Yet, our country remains indifferent to its maritime vulnerability.

The Department of Defense is becoming increasingly outspoken in opposition to measures essential to a healthy U.S. flag merchant marine, this despite warnings from many of our top military commanders about our maritime weakness. It should be remembered, of course, that the Defense Department was the original government source of the policies extending the mantle of U.S. government protection to U.S.-owned runaway flag ships.

The share of U.S. oil and essential ores carried by U.S. ships is still shrinking—down to 3 per cent for oil and a bare 1 per cent for ore imports. This is an extremely dangerous condition.

RANKING OF MERCHANT FLEETS



Both NMU and SIU have fought hard and effectively on behalf of their members in all areas. They have achieved notable gains against great odds. Yet, there can be no question that the division of maritime workers and the rivalry among them have weakened our efforts in many directions. This division has confused our friends and aided our enemies.

NMU and SIU have worked together in many crucial battles in recent years. Past unity arrangements have provided a clear idea of our united potential. There can be no question that the strength and effectiveness of both unions will be enormously enhanced by merger.

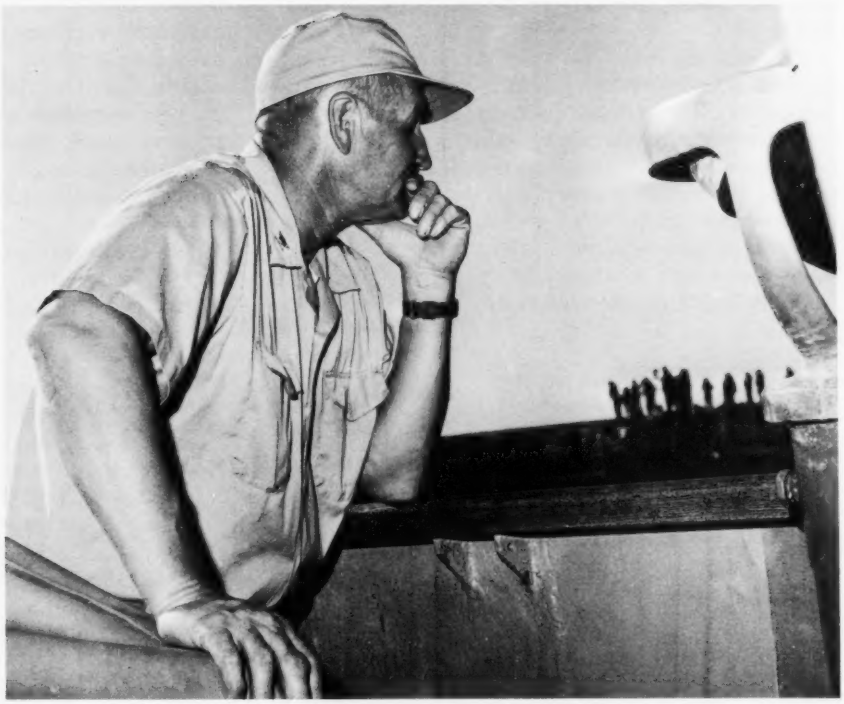
Eliminating duplication of facilities and services in the same area will mean that more and better service can be provided at lower cost.

In organizing workers in the still unorganized segments of our industry and in new developing offshore industries, a merged organization is needed. Merger will also benefit the shoreside members which we now represent and will widen our organizing capabilities in this area. Competition between unions in organizing is not only wasteful, it is damaging to the union cause. The same applies in the organization of new ships and companies. We all need our full strength in these efforts.

We also must eliminate all uncertainty and confusion concerning the seamen's position on national merchant marine policy. The NMU and SIU working together in one organization with the support of the labor movement can provide leadership in the fight for positive legislation, a long-range maritime program, curbing the runaway flag and protecting the inland water transport industry against efforts to scuttle it.

We are developing various alternative formulas by which a merged organization can be established. It is likely that independent groups of maritime workers will want to become part of this merged organization and that is part of our considerations. Also, we are aware that both NMU and SIU have membership other than vessel personnel, some of it only indirectly related to maritime. The rights and interests of these members must be fully protected and served in the merger process.

In the meantime, we wholeheartedly recommend that the unions continue to seek out every opportunity to work together on matters of mutual concern in all fields. ⚓



Nasset: "The challenge is what counts to me. I have no desire to go to sea as a passenger."

No Rocking Chair Life For Retired MSC Masters

By Linda M. Quinones

The two men have never met, but they have shared comparable experiences during their many years at sea. Both know the personal sacrifices a seagoing career demands as well as the satisfaction of guiding a ship and its crew safely through a storm. Their reasons for going to sea may not be the same, but their feelings about their profession are very similar.

Capt. Robert L. Rhoads retired from MSC, Pacific on March 25 and Capt. Lawrence O. Nasset retired June 1, but neither intends to end his seagoing career. Both plan to sail commercial vessels.

When Captain Rhoads was growing up in Hoopa, Calif. during the depression, choosing a career was a simple matter. You worked where there was work and jobs aboard merchant ships were plentiful in 1939. So, Rhoads entered the California Maritime Academy. After graduating in 1942 he received a Navy commission and saw action during World War II.

During 35 years at sea, he has never regretted the decision he made

as a 16-year-old, not even the exasperating night he spent trying to assist the skipper of a small Japanese vessel.

"I was in command of the troop ship USNS Geiger when the master of the Keni Maru radioed for assistance. It was during Typhoon Gilda sometime in 1967, and Geiger was carrying Korean troops to Vietnam.

"When I reached Maru, it was listing. I tried to tell the skipper to dump the load of lumber he was carrying and change course to avoid the storm, but he couldn't understand English and I didn't speak Japanese. When I finally got someone to relay my instructions, the skipper refused to do either. He said he was carrying valuable cargo and had a schedule to keep.

"While we were haggling back and forth the storm grew more intense and finally washed the lumber off Maru's deck, righting the ship somewhat, and when I changed course, Maru followed. We stood by until other Japanese vessels came to the rescue."

Rhoads compiled an impressive wartime record during the four years he spent in the Navy, receiving a Purple Heart Medal for injuries suffered when the USS Aludra was torpedoed. A navigator aboard Aludra, Rhoads was one of 25 of Aludra's 180 crewmen to survive.

He later volunteered for torpedo boat duty and was sent to the PT base at Sesape, on Tulagi Island. There, in late August 1943, he met Lt. John F. Kennedy.

Kennedy's famed PT 109 had been cut in two by a Japanese destroyer earlier in the month and he was putting together a crew for another patrol boat. He selected Rhoads as his executive officer.

Rhoads sailed with Kennedy for three months on PT 59. Outfitted as a gunboat, PT 59 attacked both enemy shore positions and aircraft.

In early November the PT 59 crew evacuated a Marine Corps patrol from Choisel Island. The patrol was part of a force that had landed on the island to draw Japanese attention away from the main U.S. attack on Bougainville Island. After carrying out their mission, the Marines found themselves surrounded on three sides by the enemy, with only the sea offering an escape route. The PT 59 moved in at night and lifted them to safety.

Kennedy left PT 59, his last Navy command, in November and Rhoads was her skipper for four additional months.

Rhoads left the Navy in June 1946. Unlike most Navy vets, the 23-year-old ex-lieutenant chose to remain a seafaring man. He entered a Maritime Administration school in San Francisco and after a month of instruction received his first officer's papers. A few months later he started sailing for the Army Transport Service and in 1950 he transferred to MSC.

Rhoads said he has learned many things during the years he's spent at sea. The most important is the value of tolerance and humility.

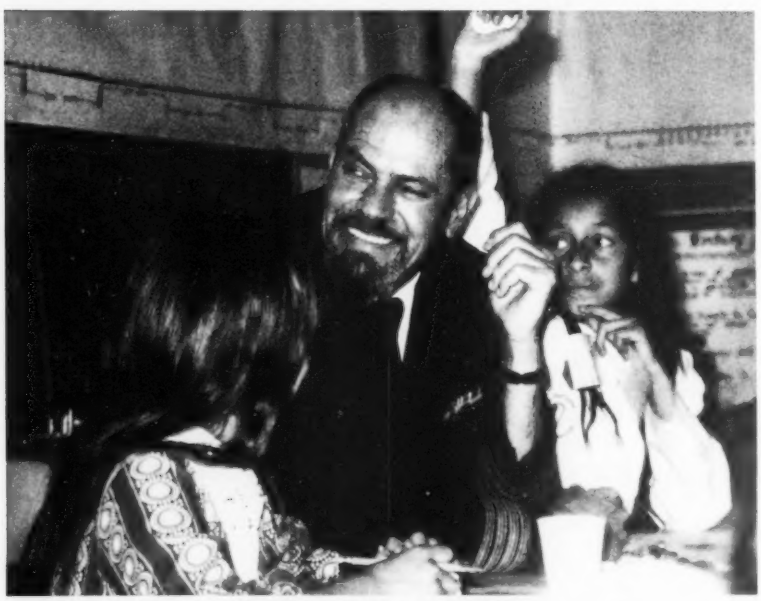
"A ship is a small world in itself. Sometimes crews consist of a curious mix of people of different nationalities and backgrounds. You must learn to overlook differences and to cope with personalities unlike your own."

Rhoads said the most challenging aspect of being a ship's master is getting the crew to work as a team.

"I have known skippers who felt very self-important, but my experience has taught me that a master has to make the crew as a whole feel important. I've always tried to be fair in giving recognition which I feel is one of the most important leadership qualities."

Rhoads said he has seen many changes take place since he's been sailing. Working conditions have improved tremendously over the years as have wages, but there is one thing Rhoads feels has unfortunately remained much the same—the myths about merchant mariners.

"Many people have a lot of romantic notions about those who go to sea. Some see mariners as adven-



Rhoads: "Being a ship's master is one of the few jobs where a man can take full responsibility for his decisions."

turous figures. Most of us though, are just doing a job, and a professional never really thinks much of the danger involved."

Rhoads has served as master of dozens of MSC ships. Among them are USNS Kimbro, Longview, Upshur, Barrett, Redstone, and Vandenberg. His last command was the Meteor.

While master of Meteor, Rhoads was involved in the rescue of eight persons from the disabled yawl Moksha in early 1977. He and his crew earned an American Institute of Merchant Shipping citation of merit for that rescue.

Rhoads feels that age is only a matter of attitude, and his attitude is not that of a man considering retiring from a seagoing life.

"Being a ship's master is one of the few jobs where a man can take full responsibility for his decisions. It's the challenge and accountability that appeal to me."

Like Captain Rhoads, Captain Nasset is not ready to leave the sea. Although he enjoys a daily round of golf near his home in San Diego, Nasset plans to return to work soon when he finds the right job.

An ex-Navy commander, Nasset joined MSC, Pacific in February 1968 as second officer of the USNS Richfield. After stints as first officer aboard USNS De Steiguer and Watertown he took command of USNS Taluga, the first Navy fleet oiler assigned to MSC for Civil Service manning and operation.

Before joining MSC, Nasset served in the Navy for more than 30 years. No stranger to fleet support, he commanded the refrigerated stores ship USS Pictor in 1961 and 1962.

"I never doubted that a Civil Service manned oiler like the Taluga would support the fleet as well as a bluejacket manned oiler. There are differences, of course, that make it patently unfair to compare crews of military ships and Civil Service manned oilers. One such major difference is the age of the crewmen. On the average, Civil Service mariners are much older than Navy crewmen and have more seagoing experience. Also, many Navy men will serve only a few years and much of that time will be spent ashore. Most civilian mariners, on the other hand, have chosen a seagoing career and spend most of their working life at sea."

Nasset was named MSC Marine Employee of the Year in 1972 for outstanding performance as master of the Taluga.

In a letter notifying him of his selection, former MSC Commander Rear Adm. John D. Chase said, "Your professional competence displayed while in command of a 27-year-old vessel, with a crew of 105 civilian marine employees who were assigned duties which were without parallel in the merchant service, has been a key factor in Taluga's rapid acceptance as a valuable member of the Pacific Fleet Service Force."

Nasset was awarded the Distinguished Civilian Service Award, the highest honor the Secretary of the Navy can bestow on a civilian, for his pioneering performance as master of a civilian manned fleet oiler.

Of all the honors Taluga received, Nasset is most proud of the National Defense Transportation Assn. Unit Award which the ship received in 1974. "It was proof of the civilian community's acceptance of the MSC underway replenishment program and that of the Navy as well since they nominated our ship and crew."

Nasset has commanded two other MSC oilers, USNS Mispillion and Passumpsic, his last MSC command. Just as he did with Taluga, he helped train their Civil Service crews and expanded MSC's capability to support the Navy fleet.

Like Rhoads, Nasset welcomes the tremendous responsibility assigned a ship master. "The challenge is what counts the most to me. I have no desire to go to sea as a passenger."

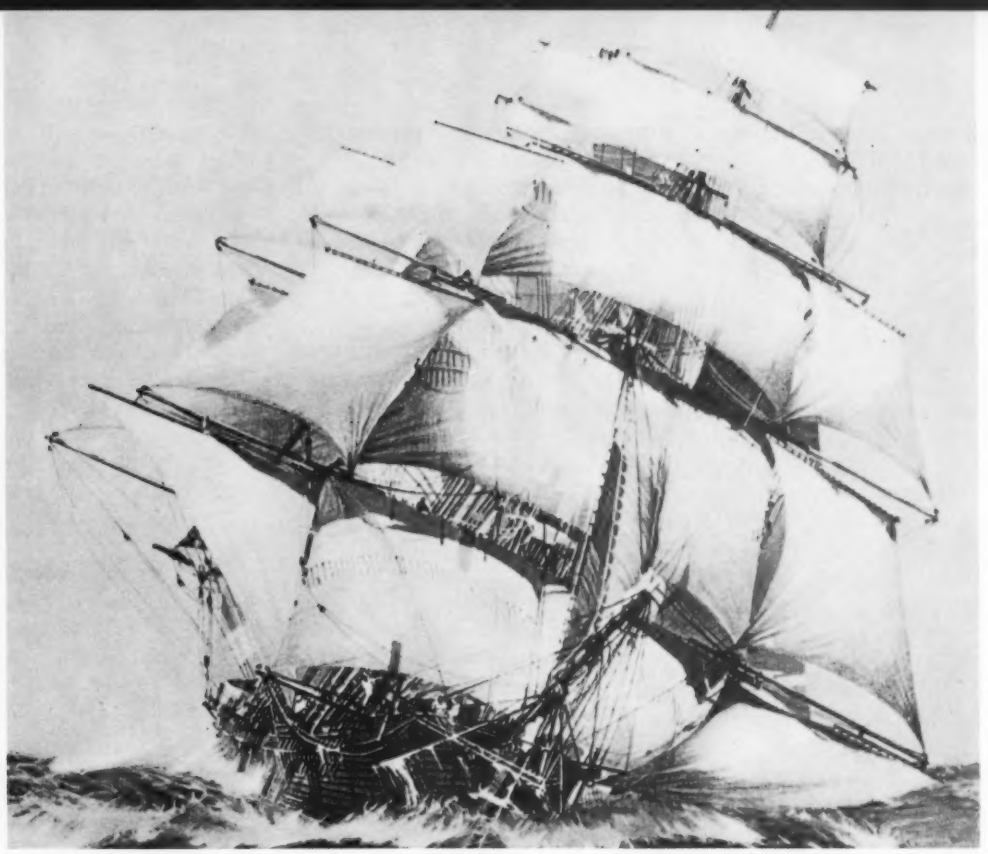
Nasset feels that "customer relations" was a very important part of his job as master of fleet support oilers. "It made our job easier and more enjoyable. I had a strong rapport with the Navy skippers of the ships we replenished. It helps to understand their job and to share problems."

Nasset also feels that a strong kinship among ship skippers helps alleviate some of the tension present during an underway replenishment. A veteran of hundreds of replenishments, Nasset considers himself lucky that his ships have never suffered as much as a scratch. That record is also a tribute to the skill of a man who literally pioneered the role now filled by eight MSC manned fleet oilers, and a refrigerated stores ship.

Nasset believes he has met all of his career goals—so far. I'm sure I'll set others as my future unfolds. "Today an experienced master can pick and choose jobs and I still have many opportunities before me."

Among the veterans of the MSC seagoing work force, it would be easy to find many mariners who would bet on that. Many could spin a few stories about two well known MSC ship masters, two men who have followed the sea as a profession, who have reached the top of the heap, and who believe that it's not yet time to quit.

Like General Douglas McArthur's legendary old soldier who never dies, Rhoads and Nasset will "just sail away." ⚓



Clipper ship captains drove their vessels as hard as they drove their men. Discipline was severe and brutal.

Scoundrels of the Waterfront

By Louis R. Granger

"The Barbary Coast is the haunt of the low and the vile of every kind. The petty thief, the house burglar, the tramp, the whoremonger, lewd women, cutthroats, murderers, all are found there. Licentiousness, debauchery, pollution, loathsome disease, insanity from dissipation, misery, poverty, wealth, profanity, blasphemy, and death, are there. And, Hell, yawning to receive the putrid mass is there also."

But historian and author Benjamin Estelle Lloyd, in describing a notorious area of San Francisco in 1876, failed to mention two types of scoundrels that lurked about the waterfront—the crimps and their runners who specialized in shanghaiing drunken or drugged sailors, or anybody who came along, to fill crew requirements of the many ships sailing out of the Golden Gate.

When even the most decrepit of human trash could not be found, the crimps and runners sold dead bodies or dressed straw dummies and passed them off as passed-out but alive crewmen.

Although the practice of shanghaiing continued at major U.S. ports until about World War I, the worst era in terms of human behavior was the half century after the beginning of the California gold rush.

It was a time of the Mickey Finn, barroom trapdoors, blackjacks and brass knuckles—tools of the runner's trade.

Names of these characters were as fanciful as those in a Damon Runyon short story.

There were Shanghai Kelly and the Shanghai Chicken, Miss Piggott, Mother Bronson, the Galloping

Cow, Scabhouse Johnny, Hell-Cat Haggerty and Three Finger Curtain.

These people were the crimps who operated the sailors' boarding-houses and saloons, and the runners whose job it was to lure the unsuspecting victims to the boarding-houses.

Oddly, what brought on the loathsome practice of shanghaiing were trade expansion, especially in the Pacific, higher wages inland, and a phenomenal growth in population in the first half of the 19th century. But shipowners' greed was also a factor.

The late Samuel Eliot Morison, historian and author, in his book *The Maritime History of Massachusetts*, wrote, "The shipowners could have obtained American crews had they been willing to pay for them, but they were not.

"Although a law of 1817 required two-thirds of an American crew to be American citizens, the law was disregarded as soon as it became the shipowners' interest to do so.

"When applicants for foremast berths became fewer, the shipowner had recourse to shipping agencies, which turned to the sailors' boarding-house keepers, making it in their interest to rob and drug seamen in order to sign them on, and pocket their two months' advance wages. Thus began the systems of crimping or shanghaiing," said Morison.

In 1849 approximately 50,000 men passed through the Golden Gate for the gold fields and at the height of the rush, about 500 ships lay stranded, their crews having left to dig at the mines.

The American merchant marine began to expand about 1840 to keep pace with the country's growth. And in 1849 the English Parliament repealed the Navigation Acts opening British markets once closed to U.S. shipping.

Easterners heading for the gold fields boarded the swift and stately Clipper ships for passage around Cape Horn, or sailed to Puerto Bello in Panama, then going overland to meet another ship on the Pacific side of the isthmus.

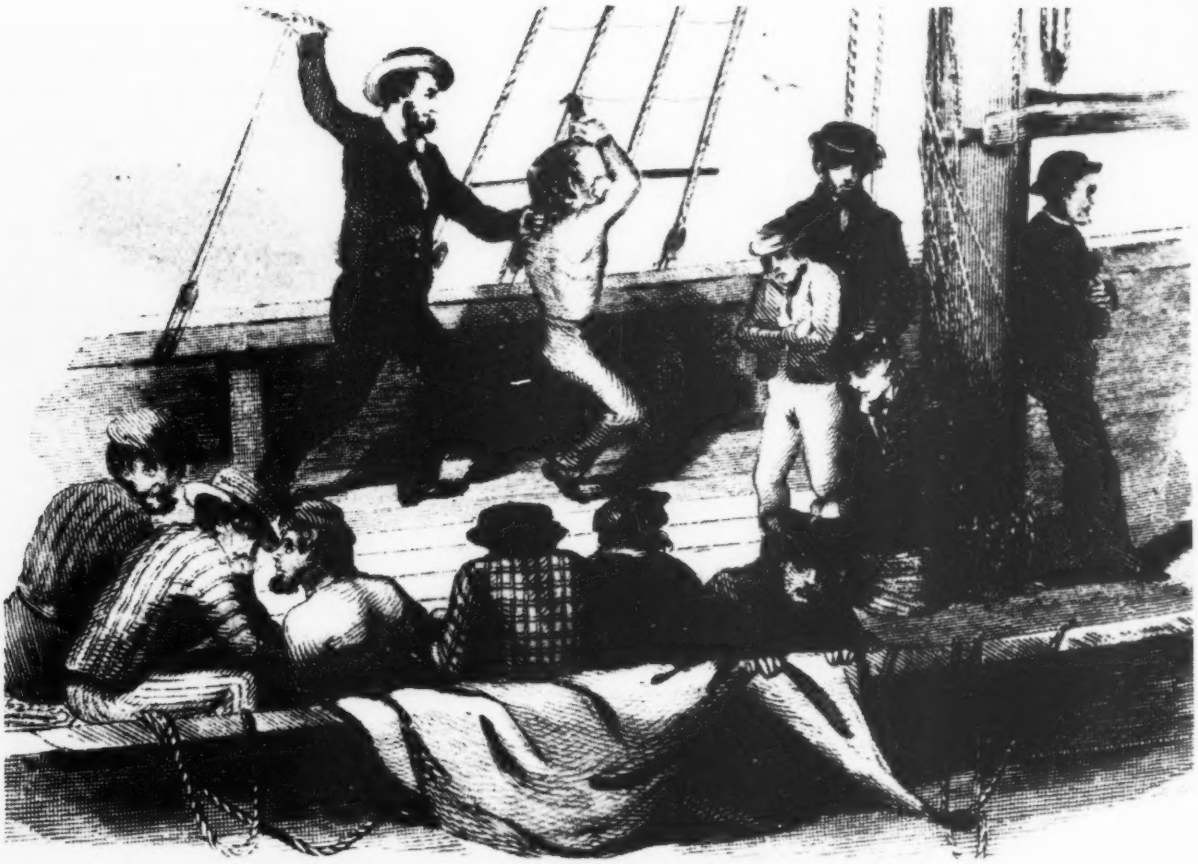
The Clipper ships were in a class by themselves (see Sealift, January 1974). They were commanded by seasoned officers who had followed the sea since boyhood. But the Yankee seaman had passed into history by 1850, replaced "by an international proletariat of the sea," said Morison.

"Men of all nations, and of the most depraved and criminal classes, some of them sailors, but many not, were hoisted, literally dead to the world, aboard the Clippers. Habitual drunkards formed the only considerable native element in this human hash."

The increase in U.S. merchant tonnage required more men, but instead of raising wages to compete with the

Courtesy San Francisco Maritime Museum

A sea of ships was abandoned along the San Francisco waterfront by crews heading for the gold fields.



better paying shore jobs, shipowners held wages to the $12 a month level that was standard after the War of 1812.

In New York the waterfront area was called Sailortown. It was located between the East River and the Hudson at Battery and the lower end of the Hudson.

San Francisco's Barbary Coast was roughly between Broadway on the north, Clay and Commercial streets on the south, Grant avenue and Chinatown on the west and the Embarcadero on the east.

The term shanghai probably was first used as a verb in this area of San Francisco. Ships sailing to or from Shanghai had to sail around the world to reach the U.S. West Coast since there were no direct trade routes between the two areas. A sailor who was forceably taken aboard a ship was said to be sent to Shanghai. Later, the expression was shortened and a sailor was said to be shanghaiied.

The runners would receive from $3 to $5 for each man they brought to a boarding-house and in so doing they stopped at nothing. Instead of a briefcase packed with colorful brochures describing their resorts, a runner's business packet consisted of a revolver, knife, blackjack, brass knuckles, obscene photos, rum and brandy and a flask of liquid soap.

With this assortment of tools they would board the vessels as soon, if not before, they were at anchor.

The liquid soap was used to spoil the soup or stew usually found simmering on the galley stove. Once the crew got a taste of this mess they were in a better frame of mind to listen to a runner's lies.

If stories of skillful harlots waiting impatiently for a sailor didn't work, or if the rum or brandy laced with Spanish fly and the girlie pictures didn't motivate the victim to leave the ship, a sailor might be beaten or threatened at pistol point and carried off by force.

Honest ship masters, and there were many who were not, were helpless against a dozen or more heavily armed thugs who sometimes locked the officers in their cabins until the entire crew was on its way to the bright lights of the Barbary Coast.

Some captains were as rotten as the crimps and runners. When a man signed his name or X to a ship's articles he was supposed to receive two months' pay in advance. This pay, however, usually went to the crimp in payment for room and board and other expenses incurred while the sailor was ashore. The rest of his pay would be given him at the end of the voyage—a period that could last from four months to several years. Pocket money could be

doled out by the captain if he had a mind to.

If the seaman deserted the ship, his pay was forfeited. Many did desert to head for the gold fields or to escape the brutality of the captain and other officers. If a ship was laid up for weeks or months while waiting for a cargo, desertion of a crew would result in considerable savings to the shipowner.

Considering the expense of an idle crew, the captains often welcomed the runners and sometimes were deliberately cruel toward their crew hoping to make their shipboard life so miserable that they would leave the ship at first opportunity—regardless of the pay owed them.

Once at the boarding-house, the sailors were turned over to the crimp who kept his victims as drunk as possible. A sailor first lost his kit bag, most likely containing all his worldly possessions, to the crimp who promised he would lock it up for safe keeping.

He was then given as much booze as he wanted, and he usually wanted more than he could handle. It was the cheapest stuff that could be found and usually was dosed with opium.

Stupified and barely able to walk, the sailor would be taken by the crimp's strongarm men around to the brothels and dives to be robbed of whatever he had left until it was time for a ship to sail. The crimp, of course, would receive a share without having to do the robbing himself.

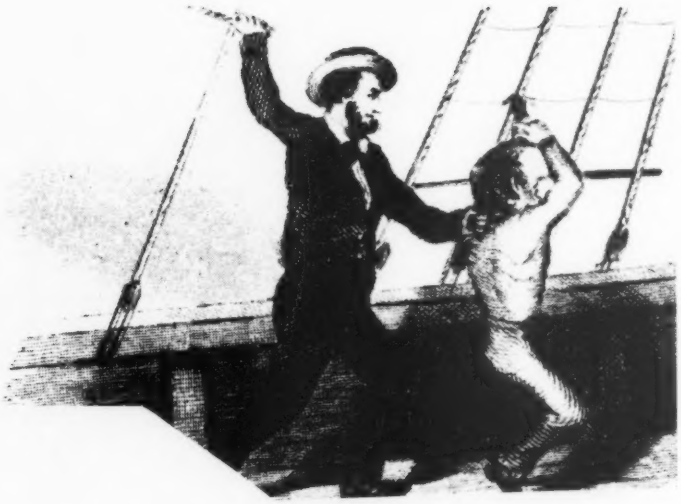
If even in his sodden state the sailor could still hang on, he was simply knocked out by a blackjack or Mickey Finn and carted off to the waterfront, loaded into a boat and delivered to the ship. When the right number of bodies lay on deck, the ship sailed. The captain paid the crimp the sailors' advance wages and a bonus of from $25 to $100—sometimes more depending on supply and demand.

It wasn't always that easy, however. Most of the time there were not enough sailors to go around and the crimps and runners were hard pressed to fill the orders. Anybody would do in that case.

Crimping was not for men only. One of the most successful crimps was Miss Piggott, a tough old woman who operated a boarding-house and saloon on Davis street in San Francisco in the 1860s and 70s. She was her own bouncer and chief bartender and her favorite weapon was bung-starter.

A trapdoor had been built into the floor in front of the bar and when a crewman was needed Miss Piggott's runner would offer to buy a man a drink and position him over the trapdoor.

The drink was the Miss Piggott



Special, well known around the Barbary Coast, concocted of equal parts of whiskey, brandy and gin—and laced with opium. The first jolt of this stuff would partially stupify the victim. Piggott then would whack him over the noggin with her bung-starter and pull a lever behind the bar opening the trapdoor. By the time he awoke he was "on his way to Shanghai."

Perhaps the most notorious crimp was Shanghai Kelly, who operated a saloon at 33 Pacific street. Kelly had three trapdoors and in addition to using the Miss Piggott Special he relied on a concoction of his own, a mixture of schnapps, beer, and opium. In addition, a cigar maker provided Kelly with cigars heavily doped with opium.

Kelly was an inventive body snatcher. His most noteworthy escapade occurred in the mid-1870s when sailors were particularly scarce. Three ships were anchored outside the Golden Gate and their masters needed full crews.

Faced with shanghaiing in large lots, Kelly chartered an old paddle wheel vessel and announced that he was giving himself a birthday party. He invited the entire population of the Barbary Coast for free booze and other attractions.

After 90 future sailors boarded the vessel he cast off. As usual, the drinks were doped and by the time the vessel reached the waiting ships all 90 picnickers had passed out and were hoisted aboard.

Kelly became somewhat of a hero that day. On the return trip he and his crew rescued survivors from a ship that had hit a rock and delivered them to the Market Street wharf. This caused a lot of excitement in town, although apparently no one noticed that Kelly had returned without his guests.

One of the most dangerous runners was Johnny Devine, better known as the Shanghai Chicken. Adept with blackjack, brass knuckles and bare fists, Chicken would commit mayhem on anyone for a small fee.

He lost his left hand in a barroom brawl and had it replaced with an iron hook. Chicken became even more dangerous than ever, but soon began to drink heavily and his career fell to rolling drunks. After killing a German sailor, Chicken was arrested and hung.

True to the saying, no honor among thieves, the crimps would just as soon cheat a ship's captain as steal a coin from a drunken sailor.

Many crimps did a thriving business in disposing of murder victims of the many criminals who hung around the waterfronts. The dead usually ended up on a ship's deck among the passed-out, but alive, shanghai victims. The entire group appeared lifeless and it was easy to pass off a dead body and the ship would be well at sea before the hoax was discovered.

Sometimes it was difficult to find a victim, dead or alive. In at least one instance, runners stole a corpse from a funeral parlor dressed it in sailor's clothes and included the dummy among a group of lifeless appearing victims.

Another trick used to fill a quota was to stuff a suit of clothes with straw and weights. A dummy probably was no easier to detect at night than a corpse.

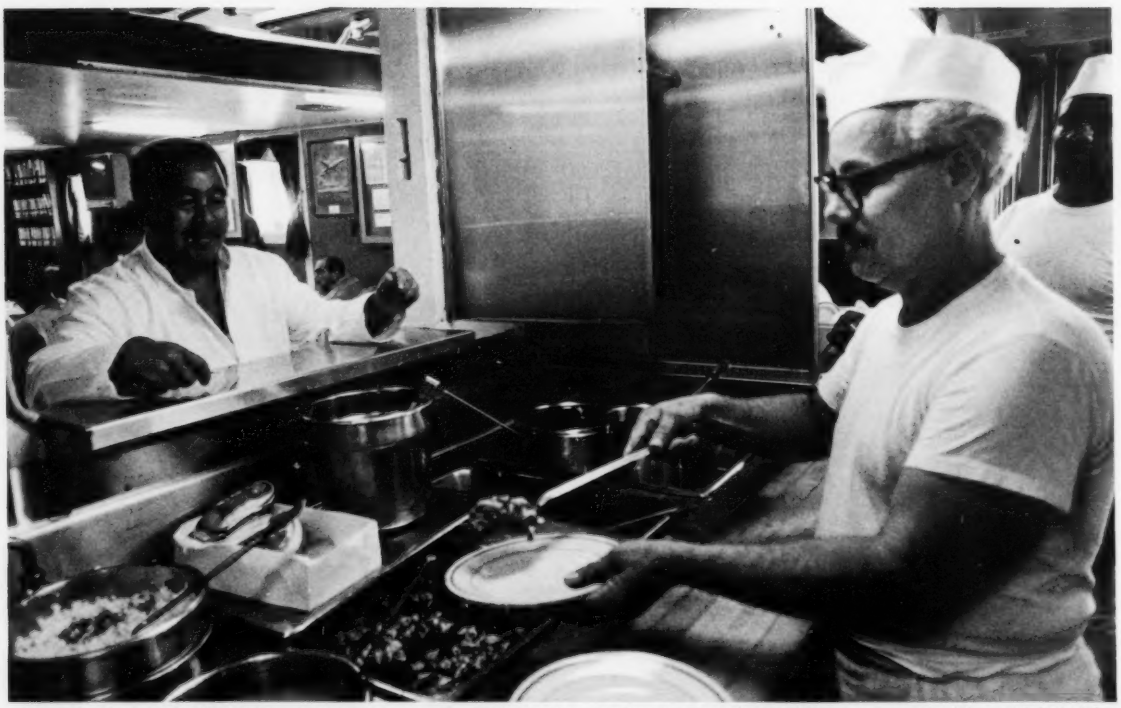
Why did the sailors put up with such a life? The answer lies within the men themselves. Drunkards, drifters, the scum of the world with little intelligence and sensitivity, they knew no other life. Although there were laws against the activities of the crimps and runners, few were arrested and fewer convicted.

The sailors had no legal rights aboard ship and expected none ashore.

Conditions for mariners began to improve in the last two decades of the 19th century when sailors began organizing into what later became unions. Concerned citizens also began to form organizations such as the Seaman's Union and Seamen's Institute.

Another major factor that helped end shanghaiing was the advent of steam powered ships. Although British steamships were in regular transatlantic service in the 1840s, U.S. companies preferred sail until about the late 1880s when steamers took over business of fast passenger and freight service. The steamers required smaller but more skillful crews.

With more professional crews, maritime unions and a more concerned society, the days of the crimps and their runners were numbered and finally they became only a sordid part of U.S. maritime history. ⚓



A cook aboard USNS Rigel dishes out a meal for a Navy bluejacket that will be served to him at his table. This is not unusual aboard MSC ships, but a sailor on a combatant vessel would have to line up on a mess deck and take what was offered. Bluejackets who go to sea with the Navy's Military Sealift Command aboard fleet support or special project ships have challenging jobs and excellent living conditions. See story on page 4.

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